

GEOGRAPHY OF ANCIENT GEORGIA

in Abkhazeti and Cherkezeti—in fact, as it is all along the ¹³³ mountain parts of the eastern coast of the Black Sea. The ¹⁷² houses in these communes are wooden chalets—one-floor shanties standing above the ground on piles and scattered at a ³⁴² fair distance from each other, and each among its own grove of trees. Dubois has explained how the Abkhaz and the Circassian sought always a solitary emplacement for his dwelling, and chose his situation near a wood into which, at any sign of danger, his family might flee. The way of life of the Laz is similar, as Strabo exemplified in his account of the Mossynoeci, "*who attack travellers, leaping down from the floors of their dwellings among the trees*".¹ The Lazes were always clever wood-workers and boat-builders,² lumbermen, fishermen³ and pirates; their mountains were impassable, and their allegiance went to the master of the sea-coast between Trebizond and Phasis, in the degree to which repression could be brought to bear upon their coastal communes.⁴

Along the coast of the Channi or Laz, where the fertile ¹⁷² river valleys come down to the sea between the mountain bluffs covered with rhododendron and azalea, there have been from remote antiquity sites which were at once roadsteads and beach-markets rather than towns. The classic writers call these places Greek foundations, but the names are Laz; and it would seem that the Greeks in developing their Euxine trade, settled here, along the Lazian coast on older native sites, as Rostovtseff has shown they did in Colchis and round the north-east shore of the Euxine to the Cimmerian Bosphorus. The place-names of the greater classic ports along the southern littoral of the Euxine are not indeed of Greek origin; they are rather Greek mouthings of older native names, which later received a definitely Hellenic form, and had attached to them some legendary explanation of the word. In the time of Xenophon the Greek population of the Pontine littoral was more sparsely scattered than in later times when Strabo, Pliny and Ptolemy wrote of it. From Samsun, eastward by Sinope and Kerasund, Greek influence thinned to its ultimate bulkhead at Trebizond. Immediately east of Trebizond there were Greek depots established at Susurmena (Surmena) and

¹ Strabo, XII, iii., 18.

² Xenophon, *Anabasis*, V, iv, 51; Wakhushki, pp. 110-11.

³ Strabo, *ibid.*

⁴ The Lazes were as dangerous to the troops of the Byzantine emperors and the Georgian kings as they were to the cohorts of Pompey (cf. Strabo, *ibid.*). The Turkish Government by savage measures suppressed, during the forties of the last century, the virtual independence which they had always enjoyed. (See Kazbegi, *Tri muryazy* s' *Tavitskoi Gruzii*, for an account of this campaign.)

000 outstanding for their height; two meters is not rare.

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Svanet'ia is perhaps the only Caucasian country where every individual house is a real fortress. The mountain villages, usually known by the Turkic term aul all over the Caucasus, always consist of a certain number of houses fortified by defense towers. In some parts of the Caucasus every second or third house, or rather estate, has such a tower. In Dagestan, in general, about three-quarters of the houses of a village are fortified. In Svanet'ia, however, most houses are built of stone and have their own tower. It was known to classical antiquity that many, or at least some, Caucasian peoples dwelt in towers, and the Mossynoikoi, mentioned above as metal workers,¹ were accordingly called "tower dwellers" (mossyn meaning "tower"; Xenophon V, 5; Strabon XII, 3, 18). For lack of wood, brushwood, and clay, stone is the only building material in many auls; but in most auls the houses, usually called by the K'art'uli term sakhli, are built of stone for reasons of defense. When the auls are built up the slopes of mountains, the sakhlis are arranged in staircase fashion one above the other, so that it is possible to go through the larger part of an aul using the roofs as the only path, i. e., by climbing from one roof to another. The roofs are flat and consist of stamped clay spread out

¹[cf. cat. 116, p. 207--A nolyst]

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361 over the wooden lattice of the horizontal roof
342 frame. These flat roofs are also much used
● for growing cereals, vegetables, curing meat,
etc. The sakhli is also the common type of
house in most parts of Anatolia and Iran, where
we also find the staircase-like arrangement of
the sakhliis on the mountain slopes.

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628 These are the lands where the kings of
Sak'art'velo or the Emirs and Khans of Shir-
van and Arran had no say, nor did the Caliph
in Baghdad or the Roman Emperor have any
authority, with the result that feuds were fought
right on the spot. Thus, there were times when
not only one aul fought another, but even one
clan or family fought another within the same
aul. Hence the many small castles; hence a
man always carried his kinzhal; hence such
customs as the vendetta, the qan-alma (Turkic:
"taking of blood"), which have been preserved
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631 there down to the present time. Svanet'ia con-
sists of three small lands: Free Svanet'ia,
Svanet'ia of the Dadishkeliani, and Svanet'ia of
the Dadiani, the latter two named after the
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771 families of their former overlords. Many
pagan elements are found in the Eastern Ortho-
dox religion of these valiant mountaineers, al-
though to a lesser degree than is true of the
Oset'i, as mentioned above, or some of the
Dagestanians, who were later converted to
Islam.

HOUSING

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The oldest and now very rare type of Georgian house is a rectangular structure of rough stones without mortar and covered on the inside with clay, usually windowless and with a flat roof consisting of beams resting on cross-beams supported by posts. In flat country it is partly sunk into the ground; in the mountains it is dug into the slope so that the back ends of the roof beams rest on the slope itself. The roof sticks out in front, forming a penthouse, again supported by the poles on the outside. The flat roof is covered with earth; the occupants spend hot evenings and nights on it. The house consists of only one room (darbazi), sometimes with a partitioned area which serves as winter stable for the livestock. In the center is the hearth, with a smoke-vent and chimney above it.

The newer farm buildings have a walled-off stable with its own entrance, saddle-shaped roofs, small windows, and, according to the needs of the family, several rooms with hearths built in projecting parts of the outer walls. The roof often extends not only in front but all the way around the house; it is supported by posts, forming a covered gangway (derepani). The houses of the more well-to-do often have a raised floor with a space under it which is used as a stable. The building materials vary according to locality. In Kartlia the houses are built of stone and earth; in the western lowlands

● C.
342 (Guria, Mingrelia, part of Imeretia) of wood;
in the Imeretian mountains (Racha) of wattle;
in Kakhetia all types occur. In eastern and
southern Georgia there is also found the so-
called "crown-shaped" roof (gvirgvini), which
consists of beams over which other beams are
placed diagonally, in successive layers narrow-
ing upwards, so that a cupola is formed. Light
enters through the spaces between the beams.

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361 In Kartlia the houses are irregularly
grouped into villages, without enclosures and
without streets. In the western subtropical
region and in Kakhetia the farms are surrounded
by fences; in Kakhetia they are situated farther
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343 apart amidst the vineyards. Besides the living
quarters, the farms have stables, hen-houses,
barns and granaries--the latter made of wattle
and raised from the ground on poles. There is
usually a hut with a cover of ferns for newly-wed
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[354] couples, a well, etc. There is also a baking-
oven consisting of a cylinder of wattle coated
with clay; after heating the oven with charcoal,
the dough is placed inside on the wall, after
which the oven is closed with a wooden lid and
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342 cloths. In wine-growing regions there is a wine
cellar with a wine press, and large earthenware
wine containers, sunk into the ground.

The Svan house is built of rough stones;
the ground plan is rectangular. It usually has
two stories. The ground floor contains a store-
room which at the same time serves as wine
cellar, and the winter-quarters for humans and

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livestock, the latter being partitioned off by a wooden barrier with openings, in front of which is the manger. The cattle-room is itself divided into two or three floors, the sheep standing above the cows. A ramp leads up to the balcony of the second floor; the latter contains the summer living-quarters and a store-room. The houses of the Khevsur are built on mountain slopes like those of Dagestan (see below). They are made of rough stones without mortar, sometimes of wattle, and usually have two stories, the lower one for the cattle and for the women and their weaving implements, the upper one for the men. The upper floor stands back from the front, leaving a kind of balcony under the roof. Often a partly open third story is added which serves as summer quarters or as a storeroom for cereals. The settlements of the Pshav and Tush are similar to those of the Khevsur but their houses have a better finish (mortar, whitewash).

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Before they were settled in the lowlands, the Circassians lived in villages (R. aul) which extended, often for miles, along the numerous rivers originating in the great Caucasian chain. The houses were built at some distances from each other, and always in or near a wooded place where the occupants could hide in case of attack. They were rectangular, made of wattle coated with clay on both sides, and contained several rooms, one being reserved for the lady of the house. The roof was covered with straw and formed a penthouse around the

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342 building; the floor consisted of packed earth and contained a firepit, above which was placed a high chimney of straw coated with clay. Outside the enclosure containing living quarters, horse-stable, and sheepfold, there was a special lodging for guests (R. kunatskaia). The dwellings of the Abkhaz were the most primitive in the Caucasus: They were rectangular structures with walls of wattle, in cold weather sometimes covered with ferns. The thatched roof rested on a beam supported at the rear by a pole, and in front by two slanting poles which touched at the top. In the back there was a partition which served several purposes: storeroom, guest room, winter stable.

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361 In the mountains of Dagestan the houses are clustered close together into villages which rise terrace-like on inaccessible and easily defended mountain slopes. The houses stand in rows, so that the roofs of one row serve as the front yards of the houses in the row above. The most common building material is rough stone; the houses consist of two or more stories, the lower one being used as stable and storeroom, the upper one containing the rooms for men, for women and for guests.

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712 A typical feature of the Caucasian mountaineers' settlements are the defense towers, which in the Svan villages are built near almost every house and are also common in the settlements of the Khevsur, Tush and Pshav. On the northern slopes of the Caucasus mountains they are found in Ossete territory and also in the